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JEANNE DUNC **
CONGRESSIONAL INFO SRV
4520 EAST WEST HWY #800
BETHESDA MD 20814

GM to Offer High-Powered 'C' Chassis

General Motors (GM) Corp., Detroit, Mich., is planning to introduce a new higher-powered Class C motorhome chassis by the fall.

The new chassis will marry the gross vehicle weight (gvw) capacity of GM's larger Class A with the cab front end of its van cutaway chassis to provide a hybrid chassis for Class C motorhomes with up to 14,500 pounds gvw.

Some manufacturers who have seen a demonstration model were critical of the chassis' height and lack of aesthetic appeal. The unit that GM has been showing, however, is a commercial chassis, which does not represent what the motorhome version will look like. GM sources said they are putting together a lower-profile unit, which will have smaller 16-inch wheels and tires.

The motorhome chassis will feature several gvw choices, ranging from 12,000 to 14,500 pounds, but units in the 12,000- to 12,500-pound gvw range are expected to be the most popular with motorhome manufacturers.

The cab will offer all the comforts that motorhome buyers are used to, and height will not be an issue, sources said.

Meanwhile, in a separate statement, Ford officials said they had no plans to bring out an E-250 cutaway chassis based on the Econoline 250 series, because they believe there would not be a market for it.

Ford acknowledged the limitations of its E-350's gvw capacity and the fact that the market has been asking for more gvw

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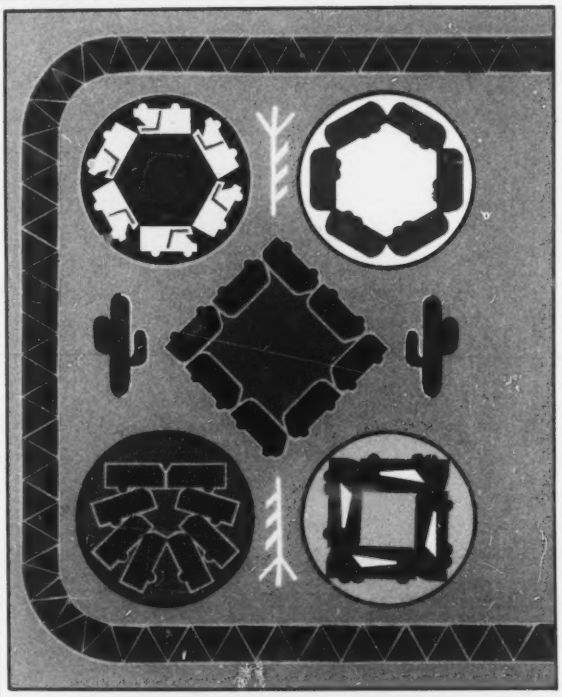

WHEN COMPANIES CREATE COMMUNITIES: Manufacturer-sponsored owners' clubs are becoming increasingly popular as a new marketing tool within the RV industry. See page 18

RVDA Sees Strong Growth in '90s

In a published year-end address, Robert Strawn, executive vice president of Fairfax, Va.-based RVDA, challenged the RV industry to exceed his rather positive market forecasts for the next 30 years by capturing a larger share of consumers in a growing population.

Strawn foresees a unit-sales growth of 15%—with 2.76 million units retailed—for the decade between 1990 and the year 2000, compared with the estimated 2.4 million units sold between 1980 and 1990. Barring unforeseen circumstances, he speculated, sales of both towable and motorized recreational vehicles could reach 3 million units for the decade between 2000 and 2010, and 3.15 million from 2010 to 2020.

Based on those projections, Strawn anticipates that the number of units on the road will expand from a projected 9 million in 1990 to 15.6 million in 2020. Inasmuch as the owners of these units provide the aftermarket's sales and service base, Strawn posited, the annual retail aftermarket should grow from an estimated $2.7 billion in 1990 to $3.3 billion in the year 2000, $3.8 billion in 2010 and $4.7 billion by 2020.

Strawn, in the year-end edition of his Fairfax, Va., trade group's newsletter, said his forecasts are based purely on

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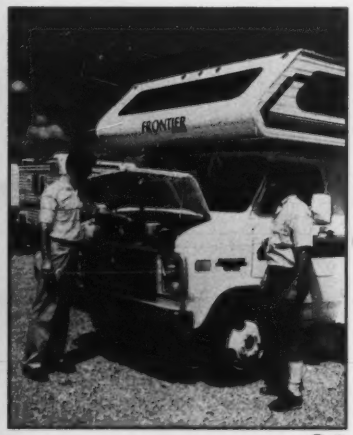

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COVER ART: ROBERT LAMARCHE

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Factory-sponsored RV owners' club are emerging as a new marketing tool for both manufacturers and dealers.

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NOVEMBER SALES PERKED UP

GAYLORD MAXWELL

Following a three-month period of lethargic sales, RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB) perked up in November 1988. Although it could hardly be termed a turnaround, this November outshined the corresponding month of 1987.

Sales volume was up a whopping 20% over 1987. Seventeen of the 22 reporting members of the DAB were up in sales dollars, with only five down. Total unit sales were up—three out of five categories in new, and four out of five in used. As per the trend that was apparent throughout 1988, the largest dealerships gobbled a larger share of the pie.

All-in-all, considering that November is generally one of the weakest months of the year in terms of RV sales, business was fairly good at the retail level.

Year-to-date, the picture was dimmer, but it wasn't all that bad compared with the previous year. As a group, the DAB dealers took in more dollars (up 8%), with 15 of the 22 members in the plus column. However, the new-unit sales total was down a couple of points. Used sales were stronger than in the previous year, with a total unit-sales figure still slightly on the positive side.

Motorhomes

It was by only one unit, but this November's total for new-unit sales exceeded that for the previous year. After two months of very negative figures, anything plus was a welcome sign. Eight of the 18 DAB members who sell motorized units were up for the month; eight were down, and two were the same. Deviating from the trend for the year, the larger dealerships—like the smaller ones—were about evenly divided between the ups and the downs. Used sales were quite good; they were up considerably from the previous November.

Profits for this category received the weakest rating all year—generally in the fair to good range. One dealer rated them poor, and no one called them excellent.

Travel Trailers

Trailer dealers on the DAB struggled all year. In October, they finally reported a month better than October 1987, and it appeared that a turnaround was occurring. November proved their hopes wrong, as new units fell again. The drop wasn't drastic, but it kept this RV type in the negative column all year. Of the 20 DAB members who sell travel trailers, 12 were down in new units for the year-to-date; seven were up, and one was the same. November used sales were down a bit, but they were still a few units ahead for the year-to-date.

Profits weren't bad, since most dealers rated them in the good column.

Truck Campers

In terms of percentages, new campers did better than any other type in November. Most of the increase was due to the success of one DAB member. Used sales showed even a better sales increase. Year-to-date, new units were still a bit off, and used sales were slightly ahead of the previous year.

Profits were rated excellent or good.

Folding Camping Trailers

As with travel trailers, DAB dealers of this type of unit have struggled all year. November saw no change in the pattern of previous months. New-unit sales were down by one unit for the month. Year-to-date, the drop was the greatest for any RV type. Nine of the 15 DAB members were experiencing sales drops from the previous year. Used units moved well, with a substantial increase over 1987.

Profits were generally rated fair.

Fifth-wheels

As in previous months, fiver dealers on the DAB did well in November and remained well ahead of the previous year in both new and used units. Fourteen of the 18 DAB members who stock them reported sales ahead of 1987. Profit ratings for this type ran consistently higher than in any other category. However, it should be pointed out that, although this RV type was generally selling well, very few dealers got big numbers. Only five of the 14 fifth-wheel DAB dealers sold more than 20 units for the year; six sold fewer than 10.

In short, this category is usually a winner but not necessarily a big winner for everyone. Δ

	NEW UNITS						USED UNITS					
	FOR MONTH			YEAR-TO-DATE			FOR MONTH			YEAR-TO-DATE		
	NOV. 1988	NOV. 1987	% CHANGE	1988	1987	% CHANGE	NOV. 1988	NOV. 1987	% CHANGE	1988	1987	% CHANGE
MOTORHOMES	125	124	+ 1	1,614	1,605	+ 1	105	90	+17	1,500	1,514	− 1
TRAVEL TRAILERS	55	59	− 7	1,151	1,193	− 4	78	84	− 7	1,151	1,143	+ 1
TRUCK CAMPERS	23	18	+28	208	230	−10	11	8	+38	104	102	+ 2
CAMPING TRAILERS	15	16	− 6	924	1,042	−11	11	8	+38	323	283	+14
FIFTH-WHEELS	27	24	+13	357	297	+20	14	13	+ 8	219	190	+15

	FOR MONTH			YEAR-TO-DATE		
	NOV. 1988	NOV. 1987	% CHANGE	1988	1987	% CHANGE
SALES VOLUME	$10,799,408	$9,034,395	+20	$143,550,051	$133,076,094	+8
TOTAL UNIT SALES	464	444	+ 5	7,551	7,599	−1
NEW-UNIT SALES	245	241	+ 2	4,254	4,367	−2
USED-UNIT SALES	219	203	+ 8	3,297	3,232	+2

The "DAB Perspective" is a compilation of data provided by *RV Business*' Dealer Advisory Board, a group comprised of 24 dealers representing a cross section of the U.S. dealer body.

Gaylord Maxwell, chairman; **Dave Altman,** Baldwin Park, Calif.; **Robert Azevedo,** Sunnyvale, Calif.; **Jack Cole,** Pacoima, Calif.; **Dick Dasson,** Victor, N.Y.; **Bill De Groot,** Junction City, Ore.; **Crosby Forrest,** Newport News, Va.; **Dan Gamel,** Fresno, Calif.; **Jerry Greer,** Columbus, Ohio; **Jerry Harrison,** Waco, Texas; **Dottie Helgeson,** Seattle, Wash.; **Newton Kindlund,** Orlando, Fla.; **Ozzie Lenhard,** Sayville, N.Y.; **Larry McClain,** Oklahoma City, Okla.; **Annette Autry-Miller,** Fayetteville, N.C.; **Jack Moran,** Warwick, R.I.; **Mike Peay,** Albuquerque, N.M.; **Edward Peterson,** Lafayette, Ind.; **William Pifer,** Warren, Mich.; **Tom Schaeffer,** Shoemakersville, Pa.; **Mel Shipp,** Chattanooga, Tenn.; **Jack Sisemore,** Amarillo, Texas; **Bill Thomas,** Bridgeton, Mo.; **Randy Thompson,** Crystal Lake, Ill.; **Larry Washburn,** Lakewood, Colo.

This report is an attempt to reflect the current retail sales picture; it does not purport to indicate RV production or factory sales to dealers.